

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Wednesday, August 27, 2003

## **Senators Seek More Kalamazoo County Jobs**

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Senators Tom George and Jason Allen Hear Testimony About Pfizer Impact

LANSING – The Biosciences Research and Commercialization Center at Western Michigan University is a good starting point for retaining and creating jobs in southwest Michigan, but lawmakers said Wednesday that the state can do more to meet the same goals.

"When a company has to downsize to remain profitable, the agony it causes ought not to be compounded by the knowledge that, with a little foresight and assistance, the loss of jobs could have been prevented in the first place," said state Sen. Tom George, R-Kalamazoo. "What we want to do is look for ways to create and maintain the kind of high-value jobs that help to make life in southwest Michigan so enjoyable."

George and fellow Sen. Jason Allen, R-Traverse City, Chair of the Senate Committee on Commerce and Labor, convened a meeting of community, business and government leaders in Kalamazoo Tuesday evening to chart a course of job growth and technology enhancement for the Kalamazoo area. The county has been affected recently by the organization of the former Pharmacia Corp., which was purchased by Pfizer in April.

"We need to make sure that state policies – tax policy, regulation and oversight – are not impairing the business climate in Kalamazoo County and throughout Michigan," Allen said. "Academic, research and private enterprises need freedom to grow, and we want to ensure that they do."

George suggested another step could be a pilot program, where a prescription drug pilot program for pharmaceutical companies – for the Kalamazoo community – might be created. He also said he is interested in attracting as much venture capital and investment in Kalamazoo to help stimulate growth.